UNDRO NEWS

- **L'enfance en Première Ligne**
- **International Search and Rescue**

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Contents

Pages

Editorial 2
Victime des catastrophes naturelles et des conflits :
L'enfance en première ligne 3
Comité des droits de l'enfant - *Un interview de Marta Santos Païs* 7
The International Search and Rescue Advisory
Group (INSARAG) 8
UNDRO at Work 12
Risk Reduction and Development Protection Programme
in the Republic of Yemen 16
Strengthening of the Co-ordination of Humanitarian
Assistance of the United Nations 20
A Tribute to Hira Nargolwala 21
Conferences and Courses 22

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Editorial

Change is in the air as we stand at the start of a new year.

In his farewell speech to the staff of the United Nations on 20 December 1991, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar remarked that during his decade in office, history had been made. "It is as if a political ice-age had ended", he said. "As the ice has melted, there is already evidence of new beginnings, early fruit of a new climate."

Among the many topics touched upon by Boutros Boutros-Ghali on his appointment, shortly afterwards, as the new Secretary-General of the United Nations, was his awareness that the Organization faces "the need for fundamental readjustments in response to a world in constant transformation".

For the first time ever, a summit of the United Nations Security Council was held in New York on 31 January 1992. The final declaration, approved by 15 world leaders, stated that the meeting had taken place, "at a time of momentous change".

A time of change implies risk and opportunity, challenge and responsibility. As members of the United Nations family, we are acutely aware of this, first as we bid farewell to Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, who takes with him the respect and gratitude of all those working within the Organization and of people throughout our globe. We recognize it also as we welcome the new Secretary-General, and pledge our continued commitment to the ideals of the United Nations, to carrying out the principles of its Charter, and to the improvement and strengthening of the system, particularly in peacemaking and peacekeeping.

In his farewell speech, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar spoke of the complex and demanding challenges which lie ahead for the Organization, stating that : "Humanitarian emergencies may require still greater courage and commitment." In particular are we, in UNDRO, resolved to respond positively to this explicit challenge.

Alongside change and challenge we should also place commemoration - of the 20th anniversary of the opening of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator on 1 March 1972. We, too, face a time of change, with the imminent departure of the Co-ordinator, Mr. M'Hamed Essaafi, after ten years service to the World Organization. As the new Emergency Relief Co-ordinator prepares to take up his duties, we are conscious of the new opportunity to do full justice to the core of UNDRO's mandate, the co-ordination of response to disaster and other emergency situations. The need for such co-ordination has accelerated rather than diminished with time. We acknowledge our will to continue, and develop, the work which began when UNDRO was created two decades ago.

En ce début d'année nouvelle, le changement est plus que jamais dans l'air du temps.

M. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar déclarait, dans son discours d'adieu prononcé le 20 décembre 1991 devant le personnel des Nations Unies, que la décennie qui vient de s'écouler avait été marquée par une accélération de l'histoire : "On peut dire, a-t-il souligné, que, dans la sphère politique, c'est la période glaciaire qui vient de prendre fin. D'ores et déjà, le dégel est l'amorce d'un renouveau et laisse entrevoir les prémices d'une ère nouvelle."...

Peu de temps après, M. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, élu nouveau Secrétaire général des Nations Unies, disait être "profondément conscient du fait que l'Organisation devait subir des réajustements fondamentaux pour faire face à un monde en constante évolution..."

Pour la première fois depuis sa création, un sommet a réuni les chefs des Etats membres du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, à New York le 31 janvier 1992. La déclaration finale, approuvée par quinze éminentes personnalités mondiales, a estimé que cette réunion avait eu lieu à un "moment de changement capital".

Mais le temps du changement n'est-il pas, paradoxalement, porteur de risques et d'opportunités, de défis et de responsabilités? En tant que membres de la famille des Nations Unies nous venons d'en prendre la mesure en deux circonstances. Tout d'abord, à l'occasion du départ de M. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar. Ce dernier nous quitte en effet après avoir su gagner le respect et la reconnaissance à la fois de tous ceux qui travaillent au sein de l'Organisation et de l'ensemble des peuples à travers le monde. La seconde circonstance est, bien sûr, l'arrivée parmi nous du nouveau Secrétaire général. En lui souhaitant la bienvenue, nous lui réaffirmons notre engagement à nous consacrer sans relâche à la poursuite des objectifs des Nations Unies, à l'application des principes de sa Charte ainsi qu'à l'amélioration et au renforcement du système, en particulier dans le domaine de l'établissement et du maintien de la paix.

Dans son discours d'adieu, M. Pérez de Cuellar, évoquant les défis auxquels l'organisation est confrontée, a mis l'accent sur leur caractère complexe et contraignant : "Des situations d'urgence appelant une intervention humanitaire risquent de requérir encore plus de courage et de dévouement" a-t-il précisé. En ce qui nous concerne, nous sommes fermement décidés, au nom de l'UNDRO, à relever ces défis.

Les défis et les changements ne sauraient nous faire oublier la commémoration des vingt ans du Bureau du Coordonnateur des Nations Unies pour les secours en cas de catastrophe, créé le 1er mars 1972. Pour nous aussi, le changement est là, imminent, comme l'est le départ du Coordonnateur, M. M'Hamed Essaafi, après dix années de service au sein de l'organisation. Tandis que le nouveau Coordonnateur pour les secours en cas d'urgence s'apprête à prendre ses fonctions, nous avons conscience de cette opportunité à saisir afin de mettre pleinement en oeuvre le mandat de l'UNDRO, en contribuant à mobiliser et à coordonner tous les moyens d'action possibles en cas de catastrophe ou autres situations d'urgence. La nécessité d'une telle coordination se fait de plus en plus sentir avec le temps. Notre volonté de poursuivre et de développer le travail commencé par l'UNDRO, il y a vingt ans, n'en est que plus impérative aujourd'hui.

Victime des catastrophes naturelles et des conflits : L'enfance en première ligne

Le 20 novembre 1989, l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies adopte la Convention internationale relative aux droits de l'enfant (Résolution 44/25). Trente ans après la proclamation de la déclaration des droits de l'enfant, cette convention se présente comme le premier instrument juridique international qui formule, en 54 articles, des garanties applicables à l'éventail entier des droits de l'enfant. Le 2 septembre 1990, vingt ratifications ayant été reçues, la Convention entre en vigueur. C'est dans ce contexte que se réunit le Sommet mondial pour les enfants qui adopte le plan d'action pour la décennie 1990 et dont la principale conséquence a été le rythme soutenu des ratifications de la Convention enregistrées durant les deux années écoulées.

"Aux conséquences désastreuses des conflits s'ajoutent celles des catastrophes naturelles ..."

Cette dernière a connu un engouement unique dans les annales onusiennes puisque, fin 1991, quelques cent dix Etats se sont engagés à en respecter les dispositions dans leurs législations et leurs pratiques. Les enfants, ces *guetteurs d'avenir*, voyaient ainsi la communauté internationale se mobiliser pour leur garantir les droits relatifs à la survie (alimentation, habillement, logement, soins de base, etc...), à la protection (enfants déplacés et réfugiés, enfants dans les conflits armés, adoption à l'étranger) et à la participation (accès à l'information, éducation, droit aux jeux et aux loisirs, participation aux activités culturelles et droit à la liberté de pensée, de conscience et de culte.) Cela s'est traduit notamment par une meilleure coordination, d'une part au sein du système international entre agences et organisations de l'ONU (UNICEF, UNHCR, FAO, UNESCO, OMS, etc...) et, d'autre part, dans leurs relations avec les Organisations non gouvernementales (ONG). Le rôle de ces dernières a d'ailleurs été décisif pour l'adoption de la convention et des programmes visant à en faire une réalité vivante.

C'est dans le contexte de cette mobilisation qu'il convient de replacer l'intérêt croissant de l'UNDRO pour les enfants victimes des catastrophes naturelles ou provoquées par l'homme.

Les enfants - leur bien être et leurs droits - sont au coeur des préoccupations de l'Organisation des Nations Unies depuis sa création en 1945. Aussi, un des premiers actes accomplis par l'Assemblée générale a t-il été de créer le Fonds des Nations Unies pour l'Enfance (UNICEF) qui est, sans conteste, aujourd'hui, le principal pilier de l'aide internationale à l'enfance.

L'UNDRO a, de ce fait, développé dès sa création une coopération étroite avec l'UNICEF pour contribuer à la coordination des efforts afin de venir en aide aux enfants victimes des catastrophes naturelles et des conflits.

Une enfance meurtrie

Fin 1991, on dénombrait vingt cinq millions d'enfants déplacés ou réfugiés à travers le monde dans des conditions souvent des plus précaires. Au cours des dix dernières années, leur nombre a ainsi doublé. Et la Princesse Anne, Présidente de *Save the Children Fund* pour le Royaume-Uni, a qualifié ce drame comme étant "l'un des défis majeurs auquel l'humanité aura à faire

face au cours des années 90" (1). Durant la décennie écoulée, plusieurs milliers d'enfants sont morts dans des conflits armés, tandis que l'UNICEF évaluait à quatre millions le nombre de ceux qui ont subi des handicaps divers, cinq millions d'enfants victimes des conflits grandissant dans les camps de réfugiés et 12 millions ayant perdu leur foyer.

Les effets directs et indirects de ces drames sur la situation des enfants sont dévastateurs - handicaps physiques, traumatismes psychologiques, destruction d'écoles et de dispensaires, malnutrition, destruction des systèmes d'approvisionnement en eau potable et d'assainissement, etc..

Parallèlement à cette plaie honteuse de "la guerre contre les enfants", les catastrophes naturelles comme les séismes, les inondations, les éruptions volcaniques, la sécheresse, se soldent souvent par de terribles bilans pour les enfants qui en sont victimes. C'est par dizaines de milliers que se chiffre tous les ans le nombre d'enfants - "démunis parmi les démunis" (2) - victimes de ces calamités.

Population vulnérable, les enfants sont à l'évidence au premier rang des victimes de toutes les situations d'urgence. Il est donc normal que la communauté mondiale ait à coeur de placer l'enfance en première ligne des actions de *prévention*, de *secours* et de *protection*. En faisant du mot d'ordre "les enfants d'abord" le crédo de son dernier rapport sur "La situation des enfants dans le monde", l'UNICEF a retenu, pour atteindre cet objectif, dix propositions prioritaires dont la réalisation est de nature à faire passer dans la réalité les dispositions de la "Convention Internationale Relative aux Droits de l'Enfant", adoptée le 20 novembre 1989 par l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies.

Mais, au delà de la réthorique généreuse qui est toujours de mise dès qu'il est question du sort de l'enfance et en dépit des efforts vigoureux de la communauté internationale, le "regard insupportable" des enfants victimes des catastrophes et des conflits fixe, à tout instant, les limites d'une action qui doit être, plus que jamais, ardemment soutenue.

"Les yeux des enfants sont insupportables, surtout quand ils vous lancent à la face toute l'évidence de la bêtise humaine ... Le Soudan a beaucoup d'enfants. Le Soudan est en guerre civile depuis trente sept ans ..." (3).

Ce constat, amer et révoltant, vaut pour bien des régions du monde confrontées à la fois aux conflits armés et aux caprices d'une nature ingrate dont les dérèglements sont souvent aggravés, dans leurs effets destructeurs, par la main de l'homme (4). Aux conséquences désastreuses des confrontations armées, qui n'en finissent pas de se multiplier, s'ajoutent ainsi celles des catastrophes naturelles.

Des rapports accablants

En décembre 1991, plus de 2 000 adolescents sont morts de faim ou noyés dans des inondations alors qu'ils tentaient de retourner dans leur pays après s'être réfugiés en Ethiopie. Cet exemple, parmi tant d'autres, illustre l'importance et l'urgence de la stratégie développée par l'UNICEF de mise en place de "corridors de paix" pour tenter d'épargner les enfants et les populations civiles et leur apporter, dans le même temps, des secours d'urgence dans des délais raisonnables.

Quelques mois plus tôt, en mai 1991, toujours dans la région de l'Est Africain et de la Corne de l'Afrique, cinquante mille somalis avaient fui leur pays en proie à la guerre civile vers l'Ethiopie (5).

En Somalie, justement, des dizaines de milliers d'enfants périssent de maladies et de malnutrition tandis que la guerre civile fait rage, rendant pratiquement impossible l'acheminement des secours et de la nourriture (6). Selon le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge (CICR), une des institutions non gouvernementales qui tente avec persévérance de faire face à ces tragédies (7), 90% des enfants somalis de moins de cinq ans souffrent de malnutrition dont 60% à un degré tel qu'ils frôlent la famine. Or, la plupart de ceux qui étaient victimes de malnutrition grave l'an passé sont aujourd'hui décédés (8).

Une année après l'épilogue de la guerre du Golfe, 900 000 enfants Iraquiens souffrent de malnutrition et la mortalité infantile a plus que triplé entre janvier et août 1991, passant de 27 à près de 80 pour mille (9).

Save the Children-Suède, "Rädda Barnen", a par ailleurs rendu public, en 1989, un édifiant rapport sur la situation des enfants dans les territoires occupés par Israël (10)

Il y aurait bien sûr des dizaines d'autres exemples qui constitueraient, de Timor à la Yougoslavie, et du Nicaragua au Liban, une insoutenable chronique de ces êtres dont "le silence est un cri" qui interpelle la conscience de chacun de nous.

Mais l'enfance, parce qu'elle est plus fragile, est aussi très souvent au premier rang des catastrophes naturelles, tels les séismes et les inondations. La section des Philippines de "Défense internationale des Enfants" (DIE), une organisation non gouvernementale (NGO) active dans l'aide à l'enfance, a rendu public un accablant rapport relatif aux conséquences de l'éruption du volcan "Pinatubo" le 12 juin 1991 et du typhon "Thelma" le 5 novembre 1991 sur les enfants des régions sinistrées.

L'impact destructeur de ces catastrophes ne se limite pas aux seules pertes en vies humaines ou aux blessures physiques. Les répercussions psychologiques, et plus particulièrement les traumatismes liés, entre autres, à la peur et à la panique, sont considérables.

En février 1976, au Guatemala, un million et demi de personnes sont brutalement sans abri suite à un séisme qui n'aura duré que quatre secondes. 20 000 enfants se retrouvent orphelins et 60% des écoles sont complètement détruites. César a six ans, ce 4 février 1976, quand la terre tremble et que la maison du village de Tecpan, dans l'Ouest du Guatemala, s'écroule. Il échappe à la mort, retrouve sa mère et sa soeur dans les décombres, mais son père fait partie des innombrables victimes de ce séisme. Roy Williams, chercheur à l'Université du Sussex, Royaume Uni, évoque pour l'UNICEF le drame de César dans un remarquable ouvrage "Children and World Development" **(11)**, où il aborde la question des enfants dans les catastrophes ("Children and Disasters"). En état de choc, César ne se remettra jamais de cette terrible épreuve. En dépit des soins prodigués, il souffre d'une grave déficience cardiaque consécutive à ce choc et sa fragilité psychologique est telle qu'il ne pourra plus retourner à l'école ...

Est-il nécessaire d'insister davantage? Ces quelques exemples pourraient, en effet, être multipliés par dizaines, notamment à travers l'Afrique, l'Asie, l'Amérique centrale et l'Amérique du Sud. Doit-on pour autant se résoudre à on ne sait quelle fatalité du désastre inéluctable pour des régions du monde qui compteront dans quelques années, à l'orée de l'an 2000, plus des trois quarts de la population mondiale?

Et peut-on passer au compte "pertes et profits" des catastrophes naturelles et des conflits armés la détresse et le calvaire de ces enfants victimes des désastres?

Leur immense désarroi vient s'ajouter à celui des victimes de la faim au Sahel africain, au Bangladesh ou à celui des enfants de la rue de Calcutta, d'Addis Abeba, de Bucarest, de Bogota, de Manille ou de Rio, dont la traque, par des escadrons de "justiciers" est l'un des drames les plus atroces de notre temps.

C'est pourtant parce que la communauté internationale refuse de se résoudre à cette fatalité que les années 90 ont été décrétées "Décennie pour la survie, la protection et le développement de l'enfant africain" et que le Sommet mondial (71 Chefs d'Etats et de Gouvernements) pour les enfants, réuni à New York les 29 et 30 septembre 1990 a défini un "Plan d'action pour la Décennie 1990". C'est dans cette perspective qu'il convient de replacer l'intérêt croissant de l'UNDRO pour les problèmes posés par les enfants sinistrés.

Savoir c'est Pouvoir ...

Cet intérêt est d'autant plus légitime que le Bureau du Coordonnateur des Nations Unies pour les secours en cas de catastrophe peut contribuer, de par la nature même de son mandat, à renforcer les activités visant à atténuer les effets sur l'enfance des catastrophes dans le cadre des stratégies de prévention que l'UNDRO s'efforce de contribuer à mettre en place. Les objectifs de sauvegarde du droit à la survie (secours d'urgence) et des droits à la protection (prévention) peuvent être, en partie, pris en charge par l'UNDRO, en collaboration avec les agences spécialisées des Nations Unies et les agences intergouvernementales.

Le crédo de l'UNICEF, "les enfants d'abord" a de tout temps été l'appel lancé, en priorité, en cas de catastrophe. La fragilité et la vulnérabilité des enfants en font les victimes en première ligne des calamités naturelles et de celles provoquées par la négligence ou la violence de l'homme. L'UNDRO est concerné par l'engagement de la communauté internationale à placer au premier rang de ses priorités l'action en faveur des enfants victimes afin que la douleur de l'enfant ne soit plus ce "cri muet" qui rend si insupportable son regard quand il souffre.

Comment faire mieux et davantage? En mobilisant plus de moyens, bien sûr, mais en étant d'abord plus et mieux informé. *Savoir c'est pouvoir.* La première étape qui permette d'agir plus efficacement consiste à mieux savoir.

Or, au regard de l'abondante information sur le nombre et le sort des enfants déplacés ou victimes de conflits, celle ayant trait aux enfants victimes de catastrophes naturelles demeure parcellaire. Conjuguée aux conséquences d'une démographie galopante et d'une dégradation accélérée de l'environnement, la mondialisation des moyens de communication et d'information nous livre des chiffres

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"... Les effets de ces drames sur la situation des enfants sont dévastateurs".

effrayants. C'est ainsi qu'au cours de la décennie 70, le nombre des victimes a été multiplié par six et celui des catastrophes a augmenté de 50% par rapport aux bilans de la décennie 60 **(12)**. Les séismes, les cyclones, et la sécheresse ont ainsi engendré la mort de plus de 95 000 personnes alors que les victimes des conflits armés, pour la même période, se chiffrent à environ 28 000 individus.

Alors que des législations, des réglementations et des formes d'intervention de secours d'urgence existent pour les enfants victimes des conflits et des guerres, elles font cruellement défaut pour ceux victimes des catastrophes naturelles. Dans une étude menée par Bill J. Locke, de l'Université de Boulder, Colorado, USA, en 1988, "Mental Health Service Utilization by Child Victims of Natural Disasters", il est affirmé que, suite à un désastre naturel, l'enfant est le plus exposé aux traumatismes psychologiques, les premiers signes de dysfonctionnements apparaissant quelques heures seulement après la catastrophe. Seule une intervention rapide permet d'éviter l'engrenage allant des premières frayeurs à une phobie profonde. L'auteur souligne que beaucoup reste à faire afin de mieux connaître les perturbations psychologiques de l'enfant, la plupart des études se basant essentiellement sur le travail effectué auprès d'adultes. Une autre étude, "Desk Study on the Needs of Women and Children in Emergencies", préparée en août 1991 par l'Université de Manitoba, USA, dans le cadre du "Disaster Management Training Programme" (PNUD/UNDRO), souligne dans son introduction la pauvreté de l'information existant sur les femmes et les enfants dans les désastres et relève le manque de statistiques dans ce domaine . "Les réactions des enfants suite à un désastre, contrairement à celles des adultes, ont rarement été évoquées..." **(13)**. L'étude met l'accent sur les réactions des femmes et des enfants aux différents stades, de la phase de "pré-désastre" à celle de la réhabilitation, en passant par les secours d'urgence eux- mêmes. L'objectif de cette réflexion est de tenter de mettre en évidence les points forts et les faiblesses des systèmes de prévention et de secours mis en place.

Elargir l'horizon du réalisable

Axées sur une meilleure information concernant les effets des catastrophes sur les enfants meurtris dans leur corps et dans leurs âme, ces approches peuvent être des plus prometteuses. En systématisant la collecte et le traitement des informations (statistiques, techniques médicales et socio-psychologiques) sur les conséquences pour l'enfance des désastres provoqués par les phénomènes naturels ou par l'action de l'homme, ces approches peuvent aider à la mise en place de stratégies d'intervention (prévention, secours d'urgence et protection) plus appropriées et donc plus efficaces.

A l'occasion du Sommet mondial de l'enfance, M. James P. Grant s'est félicité, au nom de l'UNICEF, de l'action des "institutions de la famille des Nations Unies qui ont pour vocation d'élargir l'horizon du réalisable" **(14)**. La formule a tout à la fois les accents d'un message d'espérance et d'un défi. L'action vigoureuse de l'UNICEF, du UNHCR, de l'UNESCO de l'OMS, des agences intergouvernementales et des ONG a indéniablement permis d'amplifier les campagnes de sensibilisation et de mieux organiser la concertation et la mobilisation de l'ensemble des instances onusiennes et des institutions, gouvernementales ou non, qui ont pour vocation d'intervenir en faveur de la protection de l'enfance.

Cette concertation et cette coordination, qui sont à la base du mandat de l'UNDRO en ce qui concerne "les catastrophes naturelles et autres situations revêtant le caractère d'une catastrophe", sont appelées à se développer afin que les enfants soient de moins en moins au premier rang des victimes des désastres et des conflits qui affectent notre planète.

Au moment où se multiplient les discours généreux sur les enjeux humanitaires, il nous faut redoubler d'efforts pour traduire dans les faits, de façon concrète et au quotidien, l'engagement "les enfants d'abord", pris solennellement par les Chefs d'Etats présents au Sommet Mondial de 1990, "d'accorder aux enfants la priorité absolue sur les ressources de leur nation, et, par conséquent, de notre civilisation".

Dans un monde où l'on aspire à faire de la défense des droits de la personne humaine une référence universelle de civilisation et de progrès, pouvons-nous continuer de tolérer que l'enfance demeure en première ligne des victimes des turbulences de la nature et des égarements de l'homme? ■

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(1) Reuter, 22/10/1991; traduction de l'auteur (NDLR). **(2)** Editorial du quotidien français "Le Monde" du 20/12/1991. **(3)** "Le Journal du Dimanche" (Paris), 26 janvier 1992. **(4)** cf Editorial de l'UNDRO News, nov./décembre 1991. **(5)** Reuter, 16 mai 1991. **(6)** cf sur cette question l'article de Dorothea E. Woods, "Children at War in Africa" (Quaker UN Office, Quaker House, Av. du Mervelet 13, 1209 Genève, Suisse). **(7)** Illustration récente du rôle important du CICR: "Le Journal de Genève" du 11/02/92, qui rappelle les vastes mouvements des populations somalis, suite à l'éviction de l'ex-président Menghistu, en Ethiopie, note que "le CICR se trouve avec la charge d'une dizaine de milliers d'enfants qui sont à la recherche de leurs familles". **(8)** cf "Unaccompanied Children in Emergencies", a Field Guide for their Care and Protection (publié en 1987 par the "International Social Service" avec le soutien du CICR, du UNHCR, l'UNICEF, de Redd Barna-Norvège, et de la Fondation Ford) et en particulier le chapitre 3: "Children and Trauma". **(9)**cf le rapport d'une équipe internationale de 87 chercheurs, financée par l'UNICEF, OXFAM-UK, the "Mac Arthur Foundation" et the "John Merch Fund:" Health and Welfare in Iraq after the Gulf Crisis", Octobre 1991. **(10)** "Children as Targets" : a report on military violence against children in the occuppied territories, February 1989. **(11)** "Children and World Development: A resource book for teachers" (UNICEF-UK), Richmond Publishing Co. Ltd., October 1987. **(12)** *ibid.* **(13)** Traduction de la rédaction (NDLR). **(14)** "Les Enfants d'abord", publication de l'UNICEF no. 2, 4e trimestre 1991 : "Le suivi du sommet est en bonne voie", affirme Grant.

Comité des droits de l'enfant:
"Un consensus remarquable autour de l'univers de l'enfance"

Le Comité des droits de l'enfant est l'organe de supervision mis en place par la Convention internationale relative aux droits de l'enfant. Membre et rapporteur de ce comité, Madame Marta Santos País (Portugal), a bien voulu répondre aux questions d'UNDRO News à l'occasion de son séjour à Genève pour participer aux travaux de la 48ème session de la Commission des droits de l'homme qui s'est ouverte le 26 janvier 1992.

UNDRO: Un an après l'entrée en vigueur de la Convention internationale relative aux droits de l'enfant, pourriez-vous faire le point, pour "UNDRO News", des ratifications et de l'action du Comité des Droits de l'enfant?

Un an après l'entrée en vigueur de la Convention sur les Droits de l'enfant, nous pouvons nous réjouir du nombre sans précédent de ratifications et d'adhésions à cet instrument juridique. Un nombre qui dépasse la centaine déjà. Ceci reflète un esprit de consensus remarquable autour de l'univers de l'enfance. L'origine géographique extrêmement diversifiée de ces ratifications justifie notre profond espoir face à ce moment extraordinaire d'enthousiasme et de prise de conscience élargie.

Espoir, en raison de la volonté politique manifestée par les Etats de mettre en oeuvre tout un éventail de mesures de nature législative, administrative, judiciaire, sociale ou autre pour donner corps et vie aux dispositions de la Convention et pour déclencher une chaîne de solidarité et de plus grande compréhension. Espoir, face aux formes de dialogue et de coopération internationale déjà annoncées pour l'amélioration effective des droits de l'enfant dans le monde. Le Sommet mondial pour l'enfant en est un exemple bien significatif. Espoir, enfin, face à la prise de considération des droits de l'enfant non plus comme alternative aux droits des adultes, mais par la reconnaissance de l'enfant en tant que titulaire de droits, bénéficiant d'une protection spéciale et capable dans le même temps de participer aux décisions qui le concernent.

C'est justement dans ce contexte que le Comité des Droits de l'enfant a tenu sa première session au mois d'octobre dernier. Et tout en reconnaissant qu'il fallait tenir compte de l'activité poursuivie par d'autres comités conventionnels, il s'est décidé à poursuivre son action de façon vigoureuse, dans un esprit de dialogue et de coopération avec les Etats parties, les organes et les institutions spécialisées des Nations Unies et les autres organismes compétents (tels que les ONGs). Les débats qui ont précédé l'adoption des directives pour la présentation de rapports étatiques ainsi que le règlement intérieur confirment, je le crois bien, cette détermination.

UNDRO: Le système onusien, l'UNICEF et tête, est en première ligne pour que les dispositions de la Convention internationale deviennent réalité concrète. Beaucoup reste cependant à faire. Quelles sont, selon vous, les moyens de faire face aux carences ou aux insuffisances du système mondial de protection des enfants victimes des catastrophes naturelles ou causées par des conflits?

Je pense que nous pourrions retenir trois facteurs essentiels qui pourraient contribuer à faire face aux carences ou aux difficultés existantes. Tout d'abord il semblerait fondamental de renforcer les actions de nature préventive - diffusion généralisée d'information accessible, programmes d'assistance technique et actions de formation - qui contribueraient sinon à éviter, du moins à atténuer les effets des catastrophes ou des conflits.

D'un autre côté, il faudrait renforcer l'efficacité de la coopération internationale - moyennant l'établissement d'un réseau d'informations complet et actualisé et l'articulation de l'action des différents organismes compétents.

Enfin, troisième facteur, il est impératif de faire face à la tentation de politiser ces questions et "d'instrumentaliser" les enfants notamment dans les situations causées par des conflits.

UNDRO: Le Comité compte-t-il contribuer à l'effort de réflexion sur l'amélioration des moyens de mobilisation et de riposte pour une action plus efficace en faveur des enfants qui sont au premier rang des souffrances et des injustices causées par les catastrophes naturelles et les conflits?

Le Comité des Droits de l'enfant veut naturellement jouer un rôle important dans le domaine de la protection et de la promotion des droits de l'enfant. En tant qu'organe de contrôle, il pourra y contribuer moyennant un dialogue constructif avec les Etats, qu'il pourra assister dans la mise en oeuvre de la convention.

Mais il a aussi manifesté la volonté d'agir en tant que promoteur de la Convention, c'est-à-dire, en contribuant à une connaissance plus approfondie de ses dispositions et à une application généralisée de ses principes.

D'un autre côté, le Comité est appelé à établir une coopération active avec les organes des Nations Unies, Institutions specialisées et autres organismes compétents, de façon à contribuer à ce que la Convention sur les Droits de l'enfant puisse informer de leurs activités, dans le cadre de leurs mandats respectifs, et surtout qu'elle puisse contribuer à une articulation efficace entre ces mêmes activités, tout en évitant des chevauchements et en assurant, si nécessaire, la concentration des efforts pour faire face à des situations plus difficiles.

Enfin, le Comité aura sans doute un rôle important à jouer dans le domaine de l'assistance technique, et là de nouveau, avec l'appui de tous ces organismes, onusiens ou non gouvernementaux, actifs dans le domaine des droits de l'enfant.

Dans un esprit de dialogue ouvert avec ces organismes, le Comité pourra ainsi être un élément important de la chaîne de solidarité que la Convention sur les Droits de l'enfant a, sans aucun doute, déclenchée. ■

The International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG)

by Ola Almgren, UNDRO

In a disaster situation, no help is as efficient as that which is locally available. Unfortunately, no matter how well prepared a country may be, or what resources it has at its disposal, it might still face a situation which requires more resources than it can deploy. However, whilst international relief teams may bring welcome specialized know-how, as well as technical resources, to the site of a disaster, recent emergencies clearly show that much can still be done to enhance the overall effectiveness of such operations.

During the Armenian earthquake in 1988, more than 1,000 foreign relief workers were dispatched to the disaster area by governments and organizations. Evaluations of the operation show that closer co-operation among - and between - teams and the local disaster management authorities could have improved its effectiveness. More recent examples of disasters where human resources and technology have formed an important part of foreign assistance (and which demonstrate the need for improved international procedures in their employment) are: the earthquakes in Iran and the Philippines in 1990, the cyclone in Bangladesh, and the Kurdish exodus caused by internal unrest in Iraq in 1991. Such emergencies, which require the active participation of international relief

Stig Dahlén/Swedish Rescue Services Board

A member of the Swedish Rescue Team, with his dog, searching for survivors of the Armenian earthquake in 1988.

teams and equipment, are examples of disasters with a service-intensive needs profile.

Operational Co-ordination

The need for co-ordination of disasters exists primarily on three levels: in international centres for humanitarian work such as Geneva and New York; in the capital of an affected country; and last but not least, at the field-level where relief activities take place among the victims and within the chaotic environment at the site of a disaster. This latter level of co-ordination can be referred to as Operational Co-ordination, and it includes measures to improve the preparedness of disaster-prone countries to manage an emergency. The more service intensive the needs-profile of a disaster, the greater the importance of a well functioning co-ordination of relief at the operational level.

Search and Rescue INSARAG

Between 11 and 13 December 1991, a meeting was convened by UNDRO and hosted by the German Government in Beuggen. The meeting, attended by 35 delegates, representing 15 nations and 7 organizations*, established the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG). INSARAG is the most recent step in a series of projects initiated by UNDRO in co-operation with national emergency relief services and based on experience gained from international relief operations following major earthquakes. These projects aim at improving relief operations at the site of a disaster as well as increasing the availability of competent resources, local and international. The main objective of INSARAG is summarized in the first article of its mandate "to develop effective international relationships aimed at saving lives and rendering humanitarian services following disasters".

Previously, an International Search and Rescue Workshop had been convened by UNDRO and hosted by the Government of Austria at Wattener Lizum in April 1991. At the same time a roster of experienced relief teams with a capacity for international operations was developed - the UNDRO Directory of International Search and Rescue Teams.

Photo: C. Jürgen Schmitt

The German Federal Technical Emergency Relief Service (THW) planning rescue operations in Mexico City following the earthquake in 1985.

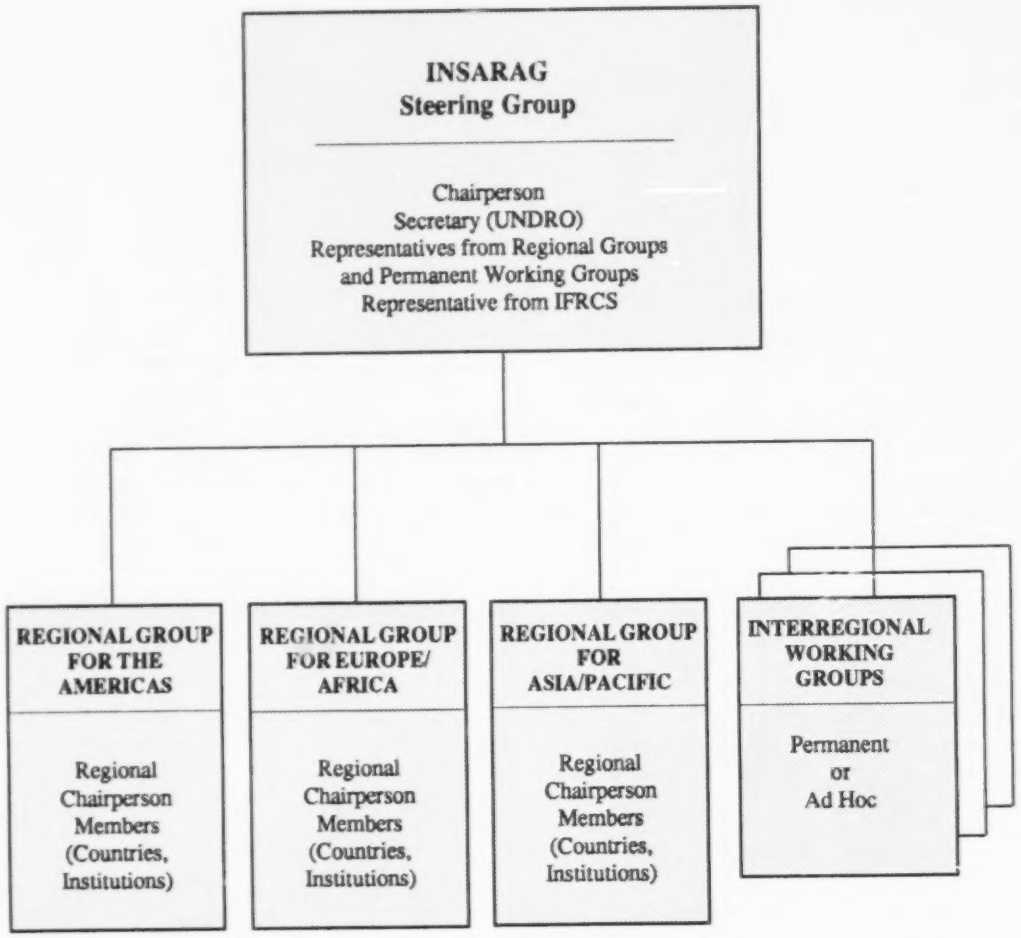
Regional Groups

The work of INSARAG will be channelled through three main components: the *Regional Groups* of ● *Africa and Europe*, ● *the Americas*, and ● *Asia and the Pacific*. In addition to these Regional Groups, INSARAG will consist of a Steering Group and subsidiary Working Groups. Membership of the Regional Groups of INSARAG is open to all countries able and willing to perform relief operations in other countries as well as countries likely to need such assistance. Inter-

**Countries:* Algeria, Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Philippines, Poland, Russian Federation, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States of America.

Organizations: Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), Centro de Coordinación para la prevención de desastres naturales en América Central (CEPREDENAC), International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Partners of the Americas, Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO).

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH AND RESCUE ADVISORY GROUP (INSARAG)



national bodies, such as the United Nations, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and the International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO) will also be involved. The mandate of INSARAG further stipulates that the Regional Groups should encourage the participation of organizations and institutes with experience in emergency response. The Regional Groups will each be headed by an elected chairperson who, with another representative from their respective group, will form the Steering Group of INSARAG. UNDRO, as the Secretary of INSARAG, and IFRC will also be members of the Steering Group which will be led by a chairperson of the full INSARAG entity. The inaugural meeting elected Mr. Toni Frisch (Switzerland) INSARAG chairperson for its first work cycle. Provisional chairpersons were elected for the Regional Groups and given a mandate to activate regional cooperation under the auspices of INSARAG: Mr. Dietrich Laepke (Germany) for Africa and Europe, Mr. Pete Bradford (USA) for the Americas, and Mr. Mitsuaki Furukawa (Japan) for Asia and the Pacific.

Working Groups

At the Beuggen meeting, three interregional working groups were established on:

- Quality Control and Inclu-

sion of Teams in the UNDRO Directory of International Search and Rescue Teams,

- On-site Operations Co-ordination Centre, and
- Exercise 93, an international exercise in emergency response to be organized by Austria.

Furthermore, working groups were established within the Regional Groups for

a) exchange of information and improvement of effectiveness in relief operations,

b) SAR medical issues,

c) SAR on-site working procedures and

d) development of the Community Technical Support Team, a concept designed to complement the international relief team at the site of a disaster.

Photo: Stig Dahlén/Swedish Rescue Service Board

Rescuers and dogs of the Swedish Rescue Team searching the rubble in the aftermath of the 1988 Armenian earthquake.

Apart from the establishment of INSARAG as such, the meeting also reviewed work done in the following fields, and as recommended in the International Search and Rescue Workshop in 1991:

- Co-operation Between Disaster Affected and Assisting Countries;
- On-site Operations Co-ordination Centre (OSOCC);
- Working Procedures and Quality Criteria for International SAR teams.

The Future

INSARAG will form a structure and platform for future initiatives in international co-operation in preparedness for and response to sudden disasters, as well as for the exchange of know-how and information among interested countries and organizations.

The co-ordination of international relief operations is not something which can be imposed. It must be offered and recognized as a service which facilitates and improves the effectiveness of a given operation. It is hoped that INSARAG will contribute to improved co-ordination by providing a tool - to UNDRO and all other participating parties - for the co-operation and development of relief procedures. The active participation of representatives of national emergency relief services and humanitarian organizations will be required if the objectives are to be realized. UNDRO, for its part, is looking at ways of strengthening its means of operational co-ordination, in line with the recent General Assembly Resolution on "Strengthening of the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Emergency Assistance of the United Nations".

■

Photo: THW-Kellner

Members of the German Federal Technical Emergency Relief Services (THW) on top of a collapsed building in Mexico City following the earthquake of 1985.

UNDRO at Work

January/February 1992

Relief: Mobilization and Co-ordination

■ **Algeria:** Following heavy rainfalls which flooded Central and Western Algeria in late January, and a medium-size earthquake which occurred in the Ain-Defla area in early February, an Information Report was issued by UNDRO on 7 February.

■ **Argentina:** Heavy rains damaged crops in the provinces of Cordoba, Chaco, Corrientes, Santa Fe and Buenos Aires in January 1992. On 6 January, an avalanche of mud, rocks and trees destroyed the village of San Carlos Minas in Cordoba province. UNDRO issued an Information Report on 7 January.

■ **Brazil:** Persistent torrential rains in late January/early February caused floods and landslides in the states of Minas Gerais and Bahia. 229 towns were affected, 41 people died, 3,900 houses were damaged and thousands of people were made homeless. As at 24 February UNDRO had issued one Information Report.

■ **Horn of Africa/Somalia:** UNDRO participated in the preparation of SEPHA's consolidated United Nations Inter-Agency Appeal for the Horn of Africa. The UNDRO programme for Somalia (1992) - aimed at strengthening the co-ordination efforts of the UN Special Co-ordinator for Emergency Relief Operations, and at arranging airlifts of relief supplies - was presented and included in the 1992 Appeal.

■ **China:** Thanks to a contribution from the UN staff in Geneva and from the UNOG staff Co-ordination Council, the Touqiao Primary School (Xinji Township in Liuhe County) was rebuilt after having been destroyed by the devastating floods of summer 1991 *(see article UNDRO News July/August 1991)*. The school, which can accommodate over 100 pupils, was opened on 22 November 1991. This project was identified by the UNDRO delegate during his assessment mission to the flooded area. The funds were channelled through UNDRO and the Jiangsu Office of the Chinese Red Cross.

Red Cross Association, Jiangsu Province, East Chine

A view of Tonqiao Primary School, Xinji Township in Liuhe County, rebuilt following the devastating floods in China last summer, through donations made by the UN staff in Geneva and the UNOG staff Co-ordination Council.

■ **Cuba:** Storm waves and rains due to a tropical depression caused extensive flooding in early February, affecting mainly the North of the country. Over 9,000 people were evacuated and 2,000 houses damaged. Following a request from the Government, UNDRO launched an appeal for international assistance on 14 February. Two Situation Reports were issued.

■ **Egypt:** In early December, a dam collapsed in Noubariah, near Alexandria, flooding villages and affecting thousands of people. An appeal for international assistance was launched on 31 December by UNDRO.

■ **Gulf Crisis:** In mid-February, an UNDRO delegate returned from a one month mission to Iraq, undertaken to assist the Co-ordinator of the UN Inter-Agency Humanitarian Plan of Action in Iraq, and reported on his mission at the 66th Inter-Agency

Working Group Meeting (IAWG), convened by UNDRO on 18th February in Geneva.

■ **Lebanon:** Severe and unprecedented snowstorms in early February directly affected 50,000 people and made 4,000 homeless. Over 40 villages in the mountainous region of the Lebanon were completely isolated; 25 people were killed and 75 injured, mostly by avalanches or by flooding caused by rain storms in the low-lying regions. Total damage is estimated at tens of millions of US dollars, mostly to agricultural land. On 14 February, UNDRO launched an appeal for international assistance following a request from the Lebanese Government. As at 20 February, two Situation Reports had been issued.

■ **Philippines - Taal Volcano Alert:** Following 479 tremors between 14 and 17 February 1992, the Philippines Institute of Volcanology and Seismology is closely monitoring "Taal", one of the country's five most active volcanoes. The Government has declared an alert, calling for a total evacuation of residents in and around the critical area. The UNDRO/UNDP Resident has mobilized the UN Disaster Mitigation Team and is closely monitoring the situation.

■ **Samoa (Western):** In response to the appeal for international assistance launched by UNDRO on 16 December following cyclone Val, contributions in cash, kind and services (as reported to UNDRO on 22 January) amounted to over US $8 million. US $25,000 were allocated from UNDRO's emergency fund for the immediate local purchase of food and, as at 17 January, seven Situations Reports had been issued.

■ **Sierra Leone - Displaced persons:** UNDRO continues to be involved in the emergency support of over 200,000 internally displaced persons. An UNDRO senior delegate is currently undertaking a three month mission to the country, in close co-operation with UNDP, various UN agencies and NGOs active in the field.

■ **Turkey:** Avalanches due to severe weather conditions in the Southeast of the country caused the death of over 250 people and damaged several hundred buildings. As at 13 February two Information Reports had been issued.

■ **Vanuatu:** Following cyclone "Betsy" which struck the Islands on 9 January, UNDRO sent a delegate from its South Pacific Project Office in Fiji to assist in the assessment of damage and of relief needs. Australia, France, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States contributed to the relief efforts undertaken by the Government of Vanuatu. UNDRO issued five Information Reports.

■ **Viet Nam:** On 16 January, UNDRO issued an appeal for international assistance in response to a request from the Government following a storm which caused extensive damage in Central Viet Nam on 28 December 1991.

■ **Yemen Republic:** 6,000 families were made homeless following floods due to heavy rains in Socutra Island in late December 1991. UNDRO issued an Information Report on 7 January 1992.

■ **Pisa Warehouse:**

❒ *Airlift Operation:* Relief items from the stock of the Japanese Government were flown from UNDRO's warehouse in Pisa to Yemen at the end of January as a contribution to the victims of the earthquake on 22 November 1991. The value of the relief goods (20,000 tents and 3,000 blankets) amounted to approximately US $120,000.

UNDRO Warehouse in Pisa

Goods donated by the Governments of Finland, Italy, Japan, Norway and USSR

Blankets
- 150X200 cm (80% wool)
- 150X210 cm (50% wool)
- 150X220 cm (60% wool)

Tents
- (12.5 m2)
- (24 m2)
- (32 m2)
- (43 m2)
- (46 m2)

Plastic water tanks
- (3,000 l)
- (3,500 l)
- (7,500 l)

Jerrycans (15 l)

Tarpaulins (24 m2)

Plastic sheeting
- (365 m2)
- (400 m2)

Plastic pails

Generators
- (4 kva)
- (6.5 kva)
- (12 kva)

Trailers for generators

Transformers

Extensible cables (50 m)

Kitchen sets

Mallets

Pickaxes

Saws

Shovels

Spades

Nylon rope (reels 200 m)

Thermic containers

NBC Protection cloth

A kitchen set is composed of various cooking and table utensils.

For further details and information on availability of goods in stock, please call UNDRO Geneva 7346011 - Ext.: 3290.

❒ *Luxembourg Participation:* An UNDRO delegate met with officials from the Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to discuss the participation of the Government of the Grand-Duchy in the Pisa warehouse. This should become effective during the second trimester on 1992. It would consist in providing relief goods in kind, and contributions in cash mainly to cover transportation expenses from Pisa to the affected areas (total grant: approx. US $500,000.) Luxembourg will be the fifth donor to support the warehouse, jointly with Finland, Italy, Japan and Norway.

❒ *Meeting with the Italian Government:* On 24 January, discussions took place in Rome between officials from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and an UNDRO delegate on further co-operation concerning the availability of additional storage capacity in the Pisa warehouse and funding prospects for 1992.

Disaster Mitigation

■ **Africa - Organization of African Unity:** At the request of the OAU, UNDRO sent two representatives from the Mitigation Branch to Djibouti, Botswana, Angola, Algeria, Burkina Faso and Tanzania (11 January to 3 February). In discussions with Government officials and representatives of national NGOs, the UNDRO delegates assessed the state of disaster preparedness in each country. National Disaster Relief Officials were given an opportunity to formulate their problems in coping with or preparing for disaster. The results of this mission will be presented in a paper to the OAU, as a background document to the Regional Meeting on Disasters in Africa, which will be organized by the OAU and take place in Addis Ababa on 13-17 April. The meeting is part of the OAU's involvement in the IDNDR and is expected to produce an African strategy against disasters on a sub-regional and a national level.

■ **Ecuador:** In January, an UNDRO consultant carried out a ten day mission within the framework of UNDRO's **Disaster Mitigation Project in Ecuador**. The main objectives of the mission, which provided a transfer of technology between Colombia and Ecuador to enhance Ecuador's early warning systems, were to review procedures in analysing the aspects of earthquakes and seismicity, as well as to review computer techniques in seismic events.

■ **Yemen Republic:** A senior officer from the Disaster Mitigation Branch undertook a mission from 11 to 26 January, to advise the Yemeni Government on how to strengthen its policies and institutional framework in dealing with Disaster Management. *(For an account of the mission, see article page 16).*

Information, Communications, Exchange of Views and Contacts

■ **UNDP/UNDRO Disaster Management Training Programme (DMTP):** A co-ordination meeting on the DMTP, hosted by UNDRO and held in Geneva from 13-20 January 1992, was attended by the technical operational partners as well as by the representatives of regional institutes and UN agencies. The meeting served, *inter alia*, as an internal evaluation of the Programme's achievements to date: viz. the three regional courses held in Colombia, Barbados and Syria, the three regional courses held in Chile, El Salvador and Guatemala; the monitoring of the implementation of the Programme in the Middle East; and the follow-up of plans for Asia. The meeting focussed, in particular, on the special needs of the African continent. The list of materials, both current and planned, and the schedule of workshops was reviewed.

■ **IFRC/UNDRO Collaboration:** A consultation meeting between the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and UNDRO took place on 18 February. Such meetings will be held on a regular basis and, in line with the memorandum of understanding recently signed by IFRC and UNDRO, they will aim to strengthen co-operation in the area of information management, including UNIENET and emergency communications, training, and co-ordination at the field level. Precise modalities will be worked out in the near future.

■ **International Atomic Energy Agency Simulation Exercise:** UNDRO participated in a one day simulation exercise organized by its Emergency Response Unit on 8 January. The exercise was based on a nuclear-reactor accident scenario.

■ **Council of Europe:** Two Representatives of the Council met with the head and staff members of the Relief Co-ordination Branch, in Geneva, on 13 February, to discuss the possible involvement of UNDRO as an active member in the "Open Partial Agreement on Major Disasters".

■ **Search and Rescue:** Between 20 and 25 January, Mr. J. Bishop, UNDRO Consultant for Search and Rescue, visited UNDRO's Headquarters in Geneva, for the follow up of the Inaugural Meeting of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), which was convened by UNDRO in Beuggen, Germany, on 11-13 December *(see article page 8)*.

On behalf of UNDRO, Mr. Bishop then went on to brief officials in the ODA in London on UNDRO's search and rescue initiatives and to discuss future initiatives in the field of operational co-ordination.

■ **Disaster Communications:** The Canadian Government has approved a Can. $30,000 contribution for UNDRO's communication disaster activities. This donation will be used in the first quarter of 1992 mainly for consultancy purposes. The balance will be used to complete the setting up of a satellite terminal at UNDRO's headquarters in Geneva.

■ **Disaster News in Brief Data Base:** Following the interest generated by the UNDRO publication "Disaster News in Brief" (1987), it was decided to create a permanent database on past and current disaster information. This database, which will be a recording of disasters in general and of UNDRO's involvement in each disaster, will cover the period from 1972 to date. As yet, information has been compiled for the period 1988 to 1991.

UNIENET News

■ A new data base entitled "Training Institutions/ Forthcoming Activities" is now offered on UNIENET. The data base was installed following a suggestion by the UNIENET Board at its meeting held on 15 November 1991, regarding easy reference through the network to information on forthcoming major training activities in the field of disaster management. It provides basic information on each training institution organizing regular disaster management training sessions, and details of courses and seminars for 1992. The following institutions are included:

ADPC-Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, Thailand; ACDC - Australian Counter Disaster College, Australia; CERG-Centre d'études des risques géologiques, Switzerland; CDPC/RMCS-Cranfield Disaster Preparedness Centre, United Kingdom; CRED-Centre de recherche sur l'épidémiologie des desastres, Belgium; Epicentre/Médecins sans frontières, France; CEMEC-European Centre for Disaster Medicine, San Marino; AFEM-European Natural Disasters Training Centre, Turkey; ICRC-International Committee of the Red Cross/Geneva, Switzerland; NASAR-National Association for Search and Rescue, USA; OPDMC-Oxford Polytechnic Disaster Management Centre, United Kingdom; USGS-U.S. Geological Survey, USA; UWDMC-Wisconsin University Disaster Management Center, USA.

All institutions wishing to be considered for inclusion of their training programme in the data base should provide the UNDRO Data Bank with appropriate information (course title, data, venue, language, topics, registration fees, application requirements, applications deadline, etc.).

■ **UNDRO NEW YORK OFFICE:**

At the invitation of the Executive Secretary of ECA, an UNDRO/NYO representative participated in, and made a statement at, the Joint Meeting of African Ministers of Planning, UNDP Resident Representatives in the African Region held at Windhoek, Namibia from 25-30 November 1991. The meeting, which dealt with the review of the fifth UNDP inter-country programmes for the Africa region, was an ideal opportunity for UNDRO to make concrete proposals in areas of disaster preparedness and prevention as well as disaster relief in Africa.

■ **Visitors to UNDRO Headquarters in Geneva during the months of January and February 1992, included:**

Mr. W. Lichem, Head of the UN Department of Austrian Foreign Affairs; *Mr. S. Davey*, USG, Director of Operations, International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; *Mr. S.J.M. Van Voorst Tot Voorst*, Co-ordinator of the Humanitarian and Emergency Aid Section, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherland; *Mr. F. Arsenault*, Director Relief Unit, CIDA; *Col. G. Ritchie*, Director of the Cranfield Disaster Management Center, United Kingdom; *Mrs. Y. Aysan*, Director of the Oxford Polytechnic Disaster Management Center, United Kingdom; *Mr. M. Priestley*, Director, Special Emergency Programme for the Horn of Africa (SEPHA); *Mr. T. Frisch*, Swiss Disaster Relief Unit; *Mrs. F. Tondre* and *Mr. J. Bonnin*, Council of Europe; *Mr. B. Tucker*, US Geological Survey, USA.

The Resident Representatives of UNDP in Iran *(Mr. V.D. Schulenburg)* and in the Philippines *(Mr. K. McGrath)*, visited UNDRO in February. ■

Risk Reduction and Development Protection Programme in the Republic of Yemen

From 9-11 December 1991, an UNDRO staff member participated in a technical seminar on "Earthquakes and their effects on Development", organized by the Engineering Department of the University of Sana'a. By coincidence, two disasters had occurred in the country the previous month (an earthquake in Al Udein and floods in Socutra Island), thus underlining the relevance of the seminar and the importance of improved loss assessment techniques. At the same time, the disasters emphasized the need for an institutional framework of policies on disaster relief and mitigation.

The proposed disaster management activities in the Yemen could serve as a model for other disaster-prone countries, therefore we produce below, in condensed form, the recommendations which a national-international team has submitted to the Government of the Yemen for their approval.

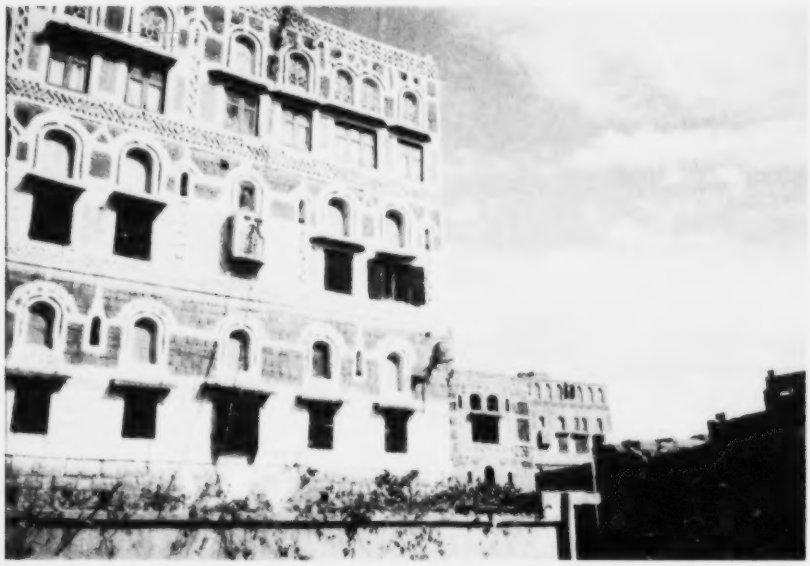
Historical surveys reveal that the Republic of Yemen is an earthquake-prone country with approximately one large earthquake occurring every 20 to 30 years. UNDRO calculations for 73 countries classified as disaster-prone - based on the number of significant events which occurred during the period 1970-1989 - indicate that the re-unified Yemen ranks amongst the top 25 disaster-prone countries.

The worst disaster in recent times occurred in December 1982 when Dhamar Province experienced a destructive earthquake with a magnitude of 6.0 Mb on the Richter scale. The earthquake caused unprecedented loss of life and property: 1600 people were killed, thousands injured, and property loss was estimated at US $2 billion. A further serious disaster occurred in November 1991 when an earthquake measuring 4.6 on the Richter scale took place in the Al Udein area, 140 km South of Sana'a. Subsequently, continuous micro-earthquake activity of 20-30 shocks per day, with magnitude of around 3.5 on the Richter scale, has been reported. Although loss of life from this earthquake was, fortunately, very low, the series of aftershocks resulted in 11,700 (or almost 70%) of the 17,000 houses in the area needing to be reconstructed. It is estimated that 80% of the directly affected population (270,000) are unable to return to their houses for fear of new earthquakes.

Yemen Government

Survivors of the Dhamar earthquake in 1982 retrieving their possessions

Many other major hazards threaten the country,



UNDRO/E. Lohmann, 1992

A typical example of Yemeni architecture

including: floods, landslides, volcanism, drought, subsidence, severe water shortages (both for human consumption and agriculture) and environmental degradation, including water and soil pollution and deforestation. These hazards have repeatedly caused significant economic losses, destruction of human life, and damage to personal and public property, in addition to those caused by major road and maritime disasters and industrial accidents.

Present Disaster Management Strategies

To facilitate the implementation of post-disaster reconstruction after the Dhamar earthquake in 1982, the Government of Yemen established the Supreme Council for Post Disaster Reconstruction, a permanent inter-ministerial board to handle all national response and reconstruction activities. Furthermore, an Executive Office for Reconstruction (EOREDA) was created to deal with all rehabilitation and reconstruction tasks in the affected regions in Dhamar.

Initially the EOREDA was established as a field office, operating through the existing office in Sana'a. One year later, the office in Sana'a was closed and the one in Dhamar became the national office dealing with earthquake disasters throughout the country. Much experience has been gained by EOREDA since 1982: in building and infrastructural reconstruction and repairs, in management and training, in the creation of revolving funds and, to some extent, in economic recovery and development. One of the unique benefits gained todate is the very successful 'self-help' programme, which may guide future reconstruction and risk reduction activities.

Government Policy for Disaster Management

The Government of Yemen is actively pursuing a policy of Disaster Management, related to both pre- and post-disaster situations, which aims to reduce the negative impact of disasters on populations living in high-risk areas and on the nation as a whole. The policy involves disaster preparedness, risk reduction activities, including protection of development projects, and

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Houses destroyed in the Dhamar earthquake

post-disaster relief and operational response, rehabilitation and reconstruction. In order to pay balanced attention to both short term post-disaster and longer term pre-disaster needs, the Government has decided to focus on developing reliable loss assessments, and on strengthening its policies and institutional framework. The following objectives have been formulated:

■ **Development of Loss Assessment Information**

A uniform procedure is being developed for examining and reporting building damage both in urban and rural areas so that a database may be established on the effects of earthquakes, or other types of disaster. For earthquakes, the procedure will be codified into "Earthquake Inspection Damage Sheets" in a format that is suitable for easy and rapid data collection in the field, and also for transfer into microcomputers for general loss assessments. The use of these procedures will yield sufficient data to assist the national authorities in: (1) reducing casualties in buildings that have been weakened by on-going seismic and other activity, (2) developing data bases for a uniform estimation of economic losses, (3) classifying (earthquake) damage so that buildings can be repaired in an orderly fashion, and (4) improving data-bases for vulnerability assessments and the development of building codes.

■ **Strengthening the Organizational Structure for Post-Disaster Management**

The Government realizes that knowledge of what **TYPE** of disaster - or combinations of disaster - may take place **WHERE,** at what **INTENSITY** and **FREQUENCY** is not only a most valuable tool for pre-disaster risk reduction planning, but also for preparedness plans. Moreover, in case of a disaster, it is important to acquire all available information about the population living in the disaster-prone region in order to speed up rescue, relief and rehabilitation operations. This information will be made available to the Army, Civil Defence, the Red Crescent Society and other NGOs and - in combination with a proper awareness and preparedness training programme - to the population groups most likely to be affected.

In this respect, important roles will be played by both Civil Defence and the Red Crescent Society. Civil Defence will be actively involved in all aspects of rescue, relief and rehabilitation; the Red Crescent Society and other NGOs - in close co-operation with the Government - will be closely involved in post-disaster relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction. EOREDA, the Red Crescent Society and the Civil Defence will work together as partners, taking into consideration the important role of the community as a necessary basis for grass-root level planning, policy making and implementation.

The above considerations make it clear that certain priorities must be established in the implementation of preparedness plans to limit the effects of disasters during rescue and relief activities. The EOREDA proposes to focus on population training in disaster-prone regions for strengthening housing programmes. The limited funds available will be used mainly for strengthening KEY FACILITIES such as hospitals, schools, critical facilities including high-risk industrial installations, and LIFELINES such as water and power supply lines, communication and transportation networks which are all essential during the rescue and relief phases.

UNDRO/H. Chowdhury, 1982

Dhamar earthquake: survivors searching the rubble

■ **An Organizational Structure for Risk Reduction and Development Protection Activities**

Changes in the institutional framework should be minimal in order not to loose the fruits of earlier experiences. Based on a thorough evaluation of the present system, the following institutional framework for disaster management is proposed: that all political authorities involved in disaster related activities are merged into one **Supreme Council for Pre- and Post-Disaster Management** with a widened mandate. The mandate will cover all post-disaster rescue and relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction aspects as well as all pre-disaster risk reduction and development protection aspects at national, governmental, local and community levels.

It is also proposed that the current Executive Office for Reconstruction in Dhamar - with its 10 years of experience and team of qualified professionals - is transformed into the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) to act as the executive body for the proposed **Supreme Council for Pre- and Post-Disaster Management.** The NDMO will be headed by a Chief in charge of the co-ordination and management of pre- and post-disaster tasks as formulated by the Supreme Council. He will be supported by sufficient permanent managerial, administrative and support staff.

As the first tasks for the National Disaster Management Office, an international team headed by UNDRO has made the following recommendations, subject to Government approval:

- The formation of a Working Group to formulate in detail the mandate, responsibilities, and job descriptions for all proposed institutions involved in disaster management, including the tasks and responsibilities of the Civil Defence and the Red Crescent Society. The detailed formula will be submitted via the Supreme Council for official Government endorsement.

- The formation of a second Working Group to prepare a Government Policy/Strategy document indicating priorities for risk-reduction programmes, and to draft land-use regulations (including proper legislation) and building codes, etc. This document will be submitted via the Supreme council for official Government endorsement.

Land-use Regulations

Special building codes and land-use regulation for the renovation of traditional Yemeni housing will have to be developed to preserve this world-famous architecture. Close collaboration with UNESCO will be necessary; the organization is presently carrying out one of the most extensive and successful urban renovation programmes in the country.

This article was prepared by Ernst J.A. Lohman Senior Co-ordination Officer, UNDRO, in collaboration with Mr. Ahed Obeid, General Manager, Executive Office for Reconstruction, Dhamar, Yemen; Prof. Dr. M. Erdik, Istanbul University, Turkey; Mr. Joel Rehnstrom, Assistant Resident Representative/UNDP Sana'a; and Mr. Abdo Seif, Programme Officer/ UNDP Sana'a. ■

ANNOUNCEMENT

Fourth Meeting of Officials in Charge of National Emergency Relief Services (NERS IV)

The report of the NERS IV meeting has now been completed. The meeting took place in UNDRO Headquarters, Geneva on 1-2 October 1991, and was attended by 90 participants from 34 countries and representatives from the European Economic Community.

A limited number of copies are available and can be obtained from:

UNDRO - Information and Publications Unit, Palais des Nations -CH-1211 Geneva 10 - Switzerland.

Strengthening of the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Assistance of the United Nations

At its 46th session, the General Assembly of the United Nations took important decisions regarding future arrangements for the co- ordination of disaster relief when it adopted Resolution 46/182 on 19 December 1991. We reproduce below extracts from the Annex to the text of the Resolution: The Annex is divided into chapters:

I. Guiding Principles

- The principles relating to the provision of humanitarian assistance are re-stated and further defined. In this regard special reference is made to resolution 2816 (XXVI) "Assistance in case of natural disaster and other disaster situations" (founding resolution of UNDRO), and 45/100 "Humanitarian assistance to victims of natural disasters and similar emergency situations".

- The central role of the United Nations in providing leadership to support affected countries is reconfirmed. It is acknowledged that the United Nations system needs strengthening and that the inadequacy of resources has been a major constraint in the effective response of the United Nations to emergencies.

II. Prevention

- The need for greater disaster mitigation efforts at the national and regional levels is stressed in which the international community should assist.

- The UNDP/UNDRO Disaster Management Training Programme should be strengthened and broadened.

- Organizations of the United Nations involved in disaster mitigation assistance should be provided with the required resources. The goals and objectives of IDNDR should be supported with the necessary resources.

III. Preparedness

- The United Nations should intensify efforts for effective early warning, building upon the existing capacities. Certain principles governing early warning are noted.

IV. Stand-by Capacity

- A Central Emergency Revolving Fund (US $50 million) should be established to complement existing contingency funding arrangements. It should be financed by voluntary contributions raised by the Secretary-General who would arrange for a donor meeting in the first quarter of 1992.

- A central register of relief capacities should be established by the United Nations, which should also make appropriate arrangements with interested governments and NGOs to ensure quick access to these when necessary.

- Special emergency rules and procedures should be developed by the United Nations to disburse funds, procure supplies and recruit staff for emergencies.

- Similar requests are addressed to disaster-prone as well as donor countries.

V. Consolidated Appeals

- The Secretary-General should ensure, for emergencies requiring a co-ordinated response, that an initial consolidated appeal is issued within one week at the latest, to be updated and elaborated within four weeks.

VI. Co-ordination, Co-operation and leadership

- The leadership role of the Secretary-General is stressed. He should appoint a high-level official (emergency relief co-ordinator) to work closely with him.

- The responsibilities of this high-level official are defined. They would combine the functions at present carried out in the co-ordination of the United Nations response

by the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator and representatives of the Secretary-General for major and complex emergencies.

- The high-level official should be supported by a secretariat based on a strengthened UNDRO and the consolidation of existing offices dealing with complex emergencies. It should be supplemented by staff seconded from concerned organizations of the system.

- The Secretary-General should ensure arrangements with the high-level official and relevant organizations that will establish responsibilities for prompt and co-ordinated emergency action.

- An Inter-agency Standing Committee, serviced by a strengthened UNDRO and chaired by the high-level official, should be established.

- The United Nations Resident Co-ordinator should ensure co-ordination at the country level under the leadership of the high-level official.

VII. Continuum from Relief to Rehabilitation and Development

- Emergency assistance should be provided in ways that will be supportive of recovery and long-term development. Development efforts should be increased, thereby contributing to a reduction of disasters and emergencies.

■

A Tribute to Hira Nargolwala

UNDRO wishes to pay a warm tribute to Hira Nargolwala, who died in July 1991, for his overwhelming generosity to victims of disasters throughout the world.

Mr. Nargolwala began his altruistic work and generous donations to UNDRO only a month after the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator was established, in April 1972, when he informed the Secretary-General of his decision to give half of his salary every month to alleviate human suffering caused by natural disasters. On occasions he apologized for the delay in transferring his donations due to his absence on mission, as Chief Technical Adviser of UNDP-financed projects, but he never asked where his donations had been used. He was as concerned with disaster victims in the United States, Europe, Asia and Africa as well as those in his native India. His compassion was as strong for the victims of floods in the Mississipi / Missouri region, in 1973, as for those of the earthquake in Northern Italy in 1976, or those of the cyclone that hit Andra Pradesh in 1977. From April 1972 to January 1981, Hira Nargolwala contributed US $62,000 to UNDRO's unearmarked disaster relief voluntary fund (or US $1,000 for every year of his life) and US $20,000 to other institutions. As retirement approached Mr. Nargolwala offered his services to UNDRO for one dollar a year and completed an UNDRO form indicating, under the question 'qualifications', NIL.

Mr. Nargolwala believed that the United Nations was not merely the reflection of governments but that of people, and as such each individual should do everything possible to alleviate human suffering. Rather than curse the darkness he lit a candle.

CONFERENCES & COURSES

Disaster Management Study Programme 1992

The Disaster Management Centre of Oxford Polytechnic has devised a new twelve week study programme in Disaster Management for 1992, which will occur in two parts.

Part 1 will involve a seven week programme of directed individual study.

Part 2. Participants will join the Disaster Management Workshop, which is an intensive five week training programme. The purpose of the individual study programme is to enable participants to work specifically on those issues of disaster planning and management that are closely related to their work and needs. While the workshop can be taken by itself, the individual study programme can only be taken together with the workshop.

Part 1: Individual Study Programme
27 April - 14 June 1992

This will be a period of directed individual study, tailored to meet the interests of each of the participants. The programme will include:

Individual tutorials; Guided reading; Seminar series; Access to audio visual materials; Written Assignments and their assessments.

The fees of the individual study programme will be £250/week or £125/week for local NGOs.

Part 2: Integrated Disaster Management and Development of Local Training Workshop
15 June - 17 July 1992

The key themes for each week of the workshop are as follows:

Week 1 - Risk Assessment/Strategies for Training and Education in Disaster Planning. **Week 2** - Emergency Management/Leadership Development for the Organization of Training courses. **Week 3** - Preparedness Planning/Teaching Aids and Learning Tools. **Week 4** - Mitigation Planning/Teaching Aids and Learning Methods. **Week 5** - Reconstruction Planning/Developing National Training Programmes in Disaster Management.

The fees for the workshop will be £450/week or £225/week for local NGOs.

Total fees for the full 12 week study programme will be £4000 (£2000 for NGOs). This does not include accommodation which will cost from about £150 to £200/week, and subsistence costs such as food and travel which will be about £70/week.

All those wishing to apply for the full twelve week Disaster Management Study Programme should write to the following address, giving details of special interests in the field of disaster management: *The Secretary, Disaster Management Centre, Oxford Polytechnic, Headington, Oxford OX3 0PB, United Kingdom.*

World Conference on Health Emergencies in Technological Disasters
5 - 7 May, 1992 - Rome (Italy)

Organized by *Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Dipartimento della Protezione Civile* and *Associazione Italiana Emergenze Sanitarie* with the co-operation of the Commission of the European Communities and the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR).

The Conference will take place at the "Centro Polifunzionale della Protezione Civile", Castelnuovo di Porto - Rome.

The Conference has the objective of studying the consequences on health of major technological disasters. The pathological, clinical, therapeutical and preventive aspects will be outlined and discussed by the major experts in each specific field in lectures, workshops, round tables. The main topics will be integrated by free paper presentations (oral communications and poster sessions).

The official language of the Conference will be English. A simultaneous translation from English into Italian and vice versa will be provided.

For further information contact: *Dipartimento della Protezione Civile, Servizio Emergenza Sanitaria, Via Ulpiano 11, 00193 Rome - Italy. Tel.: +39 6 6518258 - 6518278 - 6518481 - 6518496, Fax.: +39 6 6518223 - 6874767, Telex: +613675 PROCIV I - 612481 PROCIV i.*

First International Conference on Disaster Prevention in Urban Areas
11 - 13 May, 1992 - Tehran (Iran)

The Municipality of Tehran in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Medical Care and Higher Education, International Institute of Earthquake Engineering and Seismology (IIEES), International Research and Training on Urban Drainage (IRTCUD), and several leading Universities of Iran, is to host its First International Conference on Disaster Prevention in Urban Areas (ICDPUA-1). This Conference is intended to bring together scientists and engineers to share knowledge and experience in this field.

The following specific topics will be discussed:

- Ways of establishing early warning systems for natural disasters such as storms, earthquakes, floods and others to minimize the likely losses.
- Assessing the human and socio-economic losses caused by natural disasters, including case studies of Tehran and other major cities of the world.
- Ways of increasing the strength of the new structures through the choice of appropriate design and construction materials and methods for improving the strength of the now existing structures.
- Development of necessary building regulation and supervision.
- Emergency preparedness and response such as remedial medical help, provision of temporary necessities like food, shelter and the like.
- Public training and promotion of knowledge and skills on disaster prevention and control through various educational institution and mass media.

The official language of the Conference will be English and Farsi (Persian).

Those interested in participating in the Conference should contact: *Conference Secretariat, Organizing Committee, ICDPUA-1, Studies and Planning Institute of the City of Tehran, No. 842 Pasdaran Ave., South of Niavaran Park, Postcode 19547, Tehran, I.R. Iran. Tel.: 9821 - 283346, Fax.: 9821 - 289383, Telex: 213678 MUNT IR.*

International Symposium on Earthquake Disaster Prevention
18 - 21 May, 1992 - Mexico City

Organized by The National Center for Disaster Prevention (CENAPRED-Mexico), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Center for Regional Development (CRD-United Nations), in co-operation with the Institute of Engineering (UNAM) and the Institute of Geophysics (UNAM).

Purpose of the Symposium

In February 1991, the International Symposium on Seismic Safety on Low-Cost Housing was organized by CENAPRED and JICA in Mexico City. The event was aimed at exchanging experiences and research data on the vulnerability of housing projects in developing countries. From the conclusions obtained, it has been decided to organize the International Symposium on Earthquake Disaster Prevention. The objectives of this conference are to bring together experts in different fields related to Earthquake Disaster Prevention and to exchange knowledge in new developments in this topic, especially related to the problems in developing countries.

Themes

New Developments in Seismic Instrumentation and Estimation of Strong Ground Motion: Recent developments in seismic instrumentation related to strong ground motion and their impact on seismic hazard estimation, including studies of source process, attenuation and site effects, will be addressed.

Seismic Rehabilitation of Existing Structures: Ideas and experiences will be exchanged on the analysis, design, and performance of rehabilitated structures for improved seismic behaviour.

Seismic Hazard and Vulnerability in Developing Countries: In the spirit of the International Decade on Natural Disaster Reduction, the participants will present ongoing studies and research needs in their countries related to seismic risk reduction, with emphasis on construction standards and low-cost housing projects.

The language for oral presentations may be Spanish or English (simultaneous translation facility English/Spanish will be available).

Applications should be addressed to:
CENAPRED, Attn.: Dr. Roberto Meli, Av. Delfin Madrigal, no. 665, Col. Pedregal de Sto. Domingo, Mexico, D.F., C.P. 04380. - Tel.: (62-6) 606 9942, 606 8837. Fax.: (52-5) 606 1608.

International Training Course for Senior Civil Protection Staff
29 June - 10 July 1992 - Geneva (Training Centre Richelieu)

(Closing date for applications: 30 April 1992)

This course is intended for senior civil protection staff or those who carry out responsibility at management level in the field of prevention, intervention and disaster relief operations.

The programme of the Course will deal with the essential elements of the different Civil Defence techniques and technologies: disaster planning, management of natural or technological disasters, fire-fighting, rescue, first aid, study of the materials and equipment, etc. Reports or conferences will be held by WHO, UNDRO and other international organizations experts. Site visits will be arranged to installations of importance.

Conditions of participation

Due to the limited number of places (14), priority will be given to trainees of ICDO member States and possibly of other countries. The course will be given in English and in French.

The participation fee for this two-week Course is SF 1,000 which includes accommodation and food in the Centre as well as the cost of: instructors, documents, insurance and transportation: This amount must be paid to the ICDO bank account Studies and Training Fund, No. C5-738.683.0, Swiss Bank Corporation, Acacias Agency, Route des Acacias 6, 1227 Acacias/Geneva (Switzerland).

Applications for the Course should be addressed **before 30 April 1992** to the *ICDO Permanent Secretariat, 10-12 Chemin de Surville, 1213 Petit-Lancy/Geneva, Switzerland. Tel.: (22) 7934433, Fax.: (22) 7934428.*

Fifth Annual Counter Disaster Staff Training Programme
Cranfield Disaster Preparedness Centre
Royal Military College of Science, a Faculty of the Cranfield Institute of Technology
14 July - 20 August 1992 - United Kingdom

Aims: Cranfield Disaster Preparedness Centre is designed to provide a training and consultancy service to those with disaster preparedness and disaster management responsibilities in both developing and developed countries.

Type of Training: Action learning in small well-integrated groups. Attendance certificate given.

Designed for: Senior/middle range staff in government, public services, armed forces and NGOs.

Course objectives: To provide practical training for the development of effective working capabilities in disaster preparedness and management.

Fee: US $4,770 (course), US $1,980 (Living expenses), (Exchange rate used £1 = US $1.8).

Additional Information: Applicants are advised that applications for funding from UN, Commonwealth and UK sources must be initiated through these agencies in their own countries.

Closing date for applications is 1 June 1992. Enquiries concerning details of the course syllabus, programme, course materials and nominations, should be sent as soon as possible on the provisional application form, to be obtained from: *Mr. K.N. Westgate, Director, Cranfield Disaster Preparedness Centre, Shrivenham, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN6 8LA, United Kingdom. Tel: (0793) 785287 or 785313, Fax.: (0793) 782179 or 783878, Telex 9312111378 HMG Ref WJJ1110.*

4th International Course on Health and Disaster Preparedness
Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED)
27 July - 7 August 1992 - Brussels (Belgium)

The Course is co-sponsored by: Agency for Co-operation and Development, Government of Belgium; World Health Organization, Geneva in support of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.

The Course will focus on the importance of *Disaster Preparedness* within the health sector and its role in development programmes.

The following topics, within the specific context of *Health Preparedness and Relief* will be addressed:

- Public Health Risks; Information Systems; Management of Preparedness and Planning; and Assessment of Needs.

This two week limited enrollment course will be taught in English using presentations, workshops, exercises and case studies.

Inquiries from potential participants are welcomed and should be addressed to: *The Course Co-ordinator, Fourth International Course, Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, School of Public Health (EPID 3034), Catholic University of Louvain, 30, Clos Chapelle-aux-Champs, 1200 Brussels, Belgium. Tel.: (32-2) 7643327 or 7643823, Fax.: (32-2) 7643328, Telex: B 23722 UCL WOL.*

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